

Killing Elephants ‘for Pet Food’ Condemned

Botswana, home to Africa’s largest elephant population, is proposing using meat from the endangered animal for canned pet food, charity claims.

By [The Ecologist](#)

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Proposals to allow trophy hunting of elephants to resume in Botswana, home to Africa’s largest elephant population, and even use the meat for canned pet food have been strongly criticised by the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting (CBTH).

A report by ministers recommends a lifting of the ban and also calls for the “establishment of elephant meat canning” for pet food. Approximately 130,000 elephants – representing one-third of the world’s total remaining African elephant population – live in the country which is the size of France.

The CBTH has led international efforts to stop plans to bring back trophy hunting in the southern African nation.

Elephant trophy

Supporters of the charity including Bill Oddie and Sir Ranulph Fiennes handed in an open letter to Botswana’s High Commission in October 2018. The letter was signed by Joanna Lumley, Stephen Fry and Chris Packham, among others. A global petition coordinated by CBTH was signed by 250,000 people.

Eduardo Gonçalves, of the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, said:

“African elephants are in serious trouble. Populations have crashed in recent years, and there is a real risk of the species going extinct. Allowing elephants in their last stronghold to be killed for entertainment is the last thing it needs.

“The proposal to kill them for pet food is beyond bizarre. If the trophy hunting ban is lifted, we can expect to see an increase in elephant trophies, ivory and body parts coming into Britain. The UK was one of Botswana’s primary markets prior to the ban.

“It would be a travesty if this plan led to Britain – which oridesnits itself as a world leader in wildlife conservation – once more becoming a major global destination for elephant trophies.”

The vote by Botswana’s parliament to call for the resumption of elephant trophy hunting was condemned by conservationists and public figures.

Disappear

Joanna Lumley said:

"I have always considered trophy hunting the lowest of the low. Killing animals for fun is just disgusting. We are urging President Masisi to reject the proposal to lift the ban on trophy hunting for the sake of the elephants in his beautiful country and for the reputation of humans everywhere."

The proposal has angered leading conservationists. Bill Oddie warned that allowing trophy hunting could spell disaster:

"I'm just incredulous that anyone would even think this is a good idea.

"Elephants are fast approaching a pre-extinction phase. They've disappeared from much of Africa. You've got small isolated groups separated from one another. Trophy hunting in the one place where they are relatively thriving could spell disaster. Botswana is the last hope for the African elephant. If we lose them here, the whole battle could be lost."

Damian Aspinall added:

"As a conservationist and as someone directly involved in working to save persecuted species, I can say from first-hand experience that hunting for 'sport' is putting tremendous pressure on our wildlife.

"Trophy hunting is simply inexplicable and inexcusable, and those who practice it need to take a long, hard look at themselves and what they're doing. Elephants have been with us for millions of years. Are we really going to allow them to disappear within the blink of an eye just because a handful of people take pleasure from killing them?"

Trophy

Legendary explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes is another leading name to have thrown his weight behind the campaign:

"Our children will despise us if we let elephants die out.

"We should hang our heads in shame at what's going on. People who kill elephants for fun need to be stopped. We need a global ban and tough jail terms for trophy hunting and poaching."

Politicians from across the political spectrum have condemned Botswana's plans and backed a ban on trophy hunting. Sir Ed Davey MP (Lib Dem) said:

"The case for legal hunting of elephants ranges from weak to immoral.

"Legal hunting can often act as a cover for illegal hunting, endangering the species - and the idea that tourist money trickles down to support local people who then prevent poaching simply isn't proven. We need the ban - and we need to resource its enforcement, urgently."

Chris Williamson MP (Labour) added:

“The appalling, indiscriminate killing of elephants for their tusks is barbaric. There has been a spate of killings in Botswana, a previous safe haven for these beautiful creatures.

Collapsed

“That’s why I am calling on the Botswana Government to take action to address the slaughter of these animals without delay”.

Trophy hunting was banned in 2014 by President Ian Khama following a decline in elephant numbers in the country, since which populations have recovered. However the election of President Masisi last year has seen a push for trophy hunters to be allowed back into the country.

Botswana’s parliament passed a resolution last May calling on the government to overturn the ban, a move supported by the Vice President. President Masisi launched a ‘public consultation’ exercise which has now concluded and recommends a resumption of hunting.

It is thought there were as many as 10 million elephants at the beginning of the 20th century. Populations in Zimbabwe have collapsed by up to 75 percent in some parts of the country.

The population in Tanzania has crashed by 60 percent in the last five years, and halved in Mozambique. In Zambia – which has one of the largest groups in the 1960s – numbers have plummeted from around 200,000 to 10,000.

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